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ADDRESS
OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES

AT

THE COLLEGE OF
WILLIAM AND MARY
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA
OCTOBER 19, 1921



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AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY, OCTOBER 19, 1921.

MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY, FRIENDS OF WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE, MY COUNTRYMEN ALL: It is good to stand at this educational shrine, in the atmosphere of the Old Dominion, catching the spirit of early America, and sensing the early purpose to give the educational impulse to American accomplishment. Perhaps I feel the partiality of an Ohioan for the mother colony, since we do not forget that Ohio and the sisterhood of States wrought out of the Northwest territory were Virginia's magnificent gift to the Union. It was our fortune in Ohio, more than a century ago, to erect a State through the blend of New Englanders, Pennsylvanians, and Virginians, and the succeeding generations have watched the westward march of the Star of Empire until we join to-day in the glories and achievements of the great Republic—our common country.

I like to speak of it now, because I know the very soul of our common pride in America. We grew sectional once, but we of North and South alike made such a sacrificial offering of good American blood on the soil of Virginia that concord sprang up from the seeds planted a century and a half ago, and the bloom is that of a gratefully united Republic, with one purpose, one pride, one confidence, one constitution, one people, and one flag.

Men speak of North and South and East and West. Geographically they are correct. Customs are oftentimes varied, conditions are many times different, occupations are influenced by locality, but the interests and aspirations are common, devotion to country is everywhere the same, and the spirit of America, reawakened and rededicated, illumines the onward way for all alike.

On occasions such as bring us here to-day, it has been well-nigh an immemorial practice to speak of the importance and value of education, and to urge upon the young that by properly equipping themselves in the realm of scholarship, they will become the inheritors of both the culture of the past and the chief responsibilities of present and future. It has seemed to me that, in view of conditions which surround education in our country to-day, we might vary that custom, and consider the responsibility of the community at large toward its scholars and scholarship.

Time was, and not so long ago, when a college education was looked upon as the privilege of him who should be so fortunate as to

attain it; when it represented the assurance of place among the intellectual aristocracy, the satisfactions of culture, the gratification of refined tastes, and, presumably, a somewhat easier mode of life than might be expected by the less fortunate person who had failed to attain it.

How greatly our attitude has changed, how different has become the status of him who has enjoyed the wider educational advantages, is suggested by the most casual consideration of the present position of education as a profession, and of the educated man in the community. A generation of intensified materialism has brought a change that is no less than startling. I was reminded of it recently in reading an address of the late Senator George F. Hoar on an occasion not unlike this which brings us here. To the commencement assemblage of one of the older colleges he spoke of the long-maintained domination of England by the aristocratic "county families." He pointed out that for centuries, generation after generation, their peculiar position had made them the leading influence in the English community, because they constituted its aristocracy of wealth, culture, education and character.

Then, glimpsing the contrast between American and English life, he pointed out to the college men before him that to them was reserved a closely corresponding position in the American community. No aristocracy of inherited wealth, position, title, distinction existed here; the real aristocracy was that of intellect, of the university and college men, who he said occupied here the place corresponding to that of the old county aristocracy in England.

It is hardly a rounded generation since that analysis was presented by the great New England Senator; yet I suspect that if he were speaking in my place to-day he would make a very different address than he made three decades ago at Amherst. He would note that on the one side we have come to esteem education, not as the privilege of the fortunate few but rather as the obligation and the due of society to the very largest possible number of its members. He would descry that private philanthropy and public policy have united in pouring out wealth in this cause with a lavishness that even in his day would have seemed fabulous. And yet, on the other side, he would see that, despite all this generosity, the educational facilities of the country have utterly failed to keep pace with the demands of a people, hungering and thirsting for knowledge, culture, vision. He would find that his aristocracy of intellect was being trained in institutions still inadequately endowed, under college faculties and public-school teachers whose limited incomes compelled them to envy the affluence of the trained artisan. He would learn that in the mad pursuit of money, materialism, and the indulgences which go with them, we have tended oftentimes to make scholarship and culture sub-

ordinate to these. Our generation has bowed at the altar of mechanism and industrial organization, and in its devotions has too far forgotten that, after all, the enduring things are of a higher and very different sort. And I think he would warn us that we have come on the time when we must make these splendid material achievements, needful and gratefully possessed, the bases and buttresses for an advancing conception of eternal verities which are not of stone or steel, but yet a thousand times more lasting.

Perhaps there is no more fitting place than this to present a few fragmentary and quite casual impressions about the place and needs of education in our American society. The College of William and Mary was founded under the first royal charter to an American college. Its traditions are those of all America, and of all American history. But they are more than that. They are also the traditions of resumed progress by the English-speaking people toward popular rule, following the revolutions that ended Stuart rule. It dates back to the old days when mariners were yet seeking the "northwest passage" to the Indies, undreaming that the barrier which fretted them in their quest was in the broadest truth a new world. Its story comprehends the eras of discovery, of colonization, of revolution, and independence; after that, the marvels of national growth and development; the tragedy of fratricidal war, in which, typifying our country and institutions, it escaped destruction only at the price of a baptism in fire.

But its genius for drawing close to the spirit of the times, for always contributing greatly to the leadership of great affairs, has been the abiding glory of William and Mary. The spirit of human liberty—of that liberty that dares to build, to experiment, to found new institutes of association and conduct—has always thrived here. Here, I think we may safely infer, where the campus was the common ground between the old State House and the college structures, is to be found the oldest inspiration of the State university system which has done so much for liberal and truly democratic education. Here came Jefferson, author of the immortal Declaration, to expand a medieval college into a modern university on lines as broad as his own concept of human rights; here he found an atmosphere in which to develop those noble sentiments of mankind's fraternity which enabled him, years after writing our own Declaration of Independence, to become one of the moral inspirations and intellectual counsellors of the French Revolution. Here Washington was granted a degree, and here he served as chancellor. From this institution were graduated three Presidents—Jefferson, Monroe, and Tyler. The great lawgiver of the young Republic, John Marshall, was another alumnus; and so was George Wythe, signer of the Declaration and preceptor to Marshall and Jefferson.

But it would be impossible to attempt a catalogue of the great Americans who have received education and inspiration here. That is already yours, and a cherished possession. Their list would include literally a host of the most eminent names from the beginnings of this continent. From the earliest wars of the colonists with the Indians, down through all the struggles for making and establishing our country, the sons of William and Mary have played great parts. They have filled our halls of legislation, have been builders of new States, have adorned the bench, and honored the bar. Always they have been moved by the high ambitions of unstinted, unselfish service.

The very name of the university suggests devotion to liberty and liberty's institutions. Occupying historic ground in the midst of the peninsula on which were made the first plantings of Anglo-Saxon institutions in this continent, it has been at the center of great events from its beginnings. In the college buildings were quartered French troops after the surrender at Yorktown; and in the peninsular campaign of the Civil War the college buildings were burned and the institution well-nigh irreparably crippled. Only the devotion of officers and alumni made its resuscitation, years afterward, possible. But it was accomplished; and to-day William and Mary, firmly established, proud of its historic past, confident of its future, assured of its place in the affections of Virginia, the South, and the Nation, looks out on a prospect of yet more glorious achievement. For every reason of both sentiment and utility I give you my heartfelt wish that the effort to endow, to insure, to establish and expand this pioneer among American universities, may succeed even beyond your fondest hopes.

In dealing with the difficulties of our problem of popular education in this country, I am convinced that we will find it exceedingly worth while to conserve the traditions and ideals of such institutions as this. It is no exaggeration to say that the Nation confronts an educational crisis. From every corner of the land, from country, town, and city, comes the same report that the housing capacity for our public schools is inadequate; that tens of thousands of pupils have no place for their studies; that teachers can not be listed in sufficient numbers, and that school revenues are insufficient.

From the colleges and universities goes up the same cry. From the primary to the post-graduate school there is demand for facilities far beyond present provision. The war caused the withdrawal of an army of school and college teachers from their profession. The increasing specialization of business and industry has created astonishing demand for men and women of both liberal and specialized education.

There never was a time when the community was ready to absorb into its activities so great a proportion of people highly trained

and intellectually disciplined. It may be said that, in this realm of education, we have been drawing on our capital, instead of spending the annual increment only; we have been taking the teachers away from the schools, and leaving a constantly increasing deficit in our capacity to turn out that product of disciplined minds which only can be insured through everexpanding facilities. If I may employ a homely analogy, which I trust will not be misunderstood, we have a vastly increased supply of basic material to be put through our educational mechanism; we have correspondingly increased the market for the finished product, but we are not maintaining the refining processes on a sufficiently large scale. And it happens that this particular refined product is absolutely necessary to the continuance of our institutions and our civilization.

Let me hasten to add that this is not a condition which leads us to pessimism or misgivings. I would not wish it to be otherwise. If ever we "catch up" in provision of educational facilities, it will mean to me, not that our problem is solved, but that we have our first occasion of real concern. For no people ever approached the lavishness with which, from public revenue and private purse, Americans have given to support education; nowhere has it been so easy for the poor man or woman to gain its richest privilege. Yet, the more generously we provide to-day, the greater is the deficiency to-morrow; and I am glad it is thus. So long as the eagerness for education outruns our most generous provision of facilities, there will be assurance that we are going ahead, not backward. I am glad that, though we have billions of investment in our educational plant, there are yet more people seeking education, more demands for educated people than can be cared for.

So long as I find that the proportion of public revenue properly devoted to education is increasing, I desire to be counted among those in public life ready and anxious to struggle with the problem of raising the necessary revenues. But in that struggle, public officials require the help and counsel of every citizen who visions the vital nature of this problem. Only by such united effort can we hope to meet this, or indeed any of the urgent demands which these anxious times are pressing upon us.

I wish it were possible for us to drive home to the whole American people the conviction of needed concern for our educational necessities. We must have more and better teachers, and to get them the profession must be compensated as it deserves. Out of some experience in both, I feel qualified to assure you that there are two departments, at least, of human activity, which will never strongly attract those who seek the merely substantial rewards. Those two are teaching and the public service. There are rewards, real and highly gratifying, for those who engage in them, but they are not found in ac-

cumulations, wealth, and the indulgences which wealth makes possible. They are in the consciousness of service rendered.

I would not attempt to attract men or women to these vocations through promises of merely substantial advantages, but I would lift up a Macedonian call, in behalf of our schools and colleges, to men and women who feel the urge to public usefulness. More even than money and endowments, our educational establishment needs the devout, unselfish sustaining support of people moved by instincts of patriotism and service. These, thus inspired, may be sure that the American public will recompense them, in such a service as this, to the best of its ability; and my plea to-day is for that largest possible liberality.

There is another side, equally worthy of suggestion here. The ambition for education and its opportunities is one which men have entertained from the earliest understanding of what culture means. To those who have had the consuming, the inextinguishable ambition, its gratification has somehow always come. It has not inevitably come to him who merely regarded a college course as an agreeable experience and an obvious part of the genteel preparation of a well-mannered young man; but it has been well-nigh the assured endowment of whoever wanted it so earnestly, so persistently, that he was willing to make sacrifices for it.

I am not sure that our young people are living up to that full estimate of an education's worth. I doubt if there is as much of plain living and high thinking in academic shades as there was once, or might well be now. Among the men I have known who "worked their way through college," the ultimate evaluations of their careers have seemed to warrant impression that education which comes high to its possessor is worth several times as much as education that merely comes high to struggling and sacrificing parents.

It might be an incentive, too, to underpaid professors and instructors to go on untiringly if they were brought into contact with more of evidence that their students were making sacrifices corresponding to their own. I recall a clever young man who held a chair in a small college and was regarded as promising a brilliant career in scholarship. He had developed a specialized proficiency in a certain science, which made him much sought after by concerns engaged in a particular line of war industry. At length he resigned and accepted a position with one of them. To some expostulations of an academic associate, he replied:

To be honest, I had tired of living on less than many of my pupils spend. I have lectured to a good many young men whose allowances were twice my salary, and who in a few years after graduation were using what I had taught them to earn five times my income. Why shouldn't I try the experiment of living in comfort and worrying over my income-tax statement?

I can not prescribe the cure, but much of the unrest of the world to-day is chargeable to our living too rapidly, and too extravagantly, and colleges have seen the reflex of it in conditions described by sentiments above quoted. It would be fine to drive to restored simplicity, and turn the savings to widened facilities, and the healthful practice to the making of better men and women.

Along with all this there is the obligation to maintain and encourage the smaller colleges, among which none is entitled to claim so romantic and appealing a history as the institution whose guests we are to-day. It is the small college that democratizes the higher education; that brings it within the vision and means of the average young man and woman. Here, too, the student finds that intimate association with his instructors which is impossible in the greatest universities, and which so largely countervails the advantage of the wealthier institutions in endowments and facilities.

The essence of a great school is not in marble and mortar and architecture; nor yet in multitude of matriculants. The substance of scholarship is not in accumulated tomes and musty manuscripts. We hear much of the traditions of famous universities, but if we look into them we commonly find that they concern men, men who have stamped their personalities, who have given of their generous natures, who have colored the intellectual atmosphere about them. And men who are big and strong enough to do that are as likely to be found in the modest as in the impressive environment.

If you will analyze the traditions of William and Mary you will agree with me that George Wythe, whom Jefferson lovingly and reverently called "the Aristides of America," could never have exerted so determining an influence over his pupils had their associations been the casual ones of student and teacher in a great modern university. And there was Col. Ewell, soldier and scholar, who held the presidency of his beloved William and Mary during the years, following the Civil War, when for want of funds the university suspended. There were neither students nor money; the buildings had been left ruins in the wake of war; but there was the unbroken faith, the stout heart of that grand old man whom the late Senator Hoar thus described in a speech at Harvard in 1886:

The stout-hearted old president still rings the morning bell and keeps the charter alive; and I want to salute him to-day from Harvard, and I should value it more than any public honor or private good fortune that could come to me if I might live to see that old historic college of Virginia endowed anew with liberal aid of the sons of Harvard.

Col. Ewell's affection for his alma mater was the sentiment that thousands of men entertain for the small colleges that afforded them the education they could never have secured at great institutions. Our trouble is not that there are too many small colleges, but

that there are not enough of them. In this teeming, this riotously rich and growing America, they will not stay small. The small college of yesterday is the great school of to-day; the pioneer prairie universities of a few decades ago now count their faculties in hundreds, their students far into the thousands, and are the wonders of the academic world. Let us not fear for the place of the small college in American life; let us rather give it all encouragement in its beginnings and in those periods of struggle and depression such as William and Mary has so many times known and so splendidly survived.

There is no more interesting educational story than that of the rise of the State universities which have grown up in almost all of the States; of city colleges and universities, maintained wholly or in part as municipal institutions of higher learning; finally, of that great majority of our colleges and universities, which have been built and maintained through the interest and philanthropy of religious denominations or of citizens inspired only by the wish to encourage learning.

In no country or age has there been so constant and generous support for education. Wise men have seen in this marked American characteristic an eloquent testimony to the soundness of our individualistic society, and the security of those institutions of popular government on which it rests. At the last, our hopes for the evolution of a constantly improving system of human organization will find their justification in the widening, the deepening, the universalization of that intelligence, that moral consciousness which furnish inspiration for every human advance. Believing this, and convinced that the American Nation believes it, I salute as high exemplar and ideal the spirit that has fostered, maintained, and is now summoning to a new place and greatness, this Spartan among American universities, the College of William and Mary, in Virginia.



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